



*Research for People and the Planet*

October 21, 2010

Mr. Phil Isenberg  
Chair, Delta Stewardship Council  
980 Ninth St. Suite 1500  
Sacramento, California 95814

(via email; copies to [joe.grindstaff@deltacouncil.ca.gov](mailto:joe.grindstaff@deltacouncil.ca.gov), [keith.coolidge@deltacouncil.ca.gov](mailto:keith.coolidge@deltacouncil.ca.gov),  
[phil.isenberg@deltacouncil.ca.gov](mailto:phil.isenberg@deltacouncil.ca.gov))

Dear Chairman Isenberg and Council Members,

The Pacific Institute has been following, from a distance, the recent discussion and exchange of letters and views with the Environmental Water Caucus, the California Farm Bureau, and SFCWA. Because some of the work of the Institute preparing quantitative assessments of the potential for both urban and agricultural water efficiency improvements has been cited in this exchange, I felt it important to weigh in with some observations and a recommendation.

I do not need, of course, to tell you that the Delta is in crisis, or that there is a rare opportunity now to make some forward progress in resolving some of California's long-standing, complex, and politically ugly water disputes. But any progress will require that you, the Council, be open and willing to look at and analyze a full suite of alternatives rather than the narrow and constrained set of options usually considered because of unwritten "taboos" and an unwillingness to be open to effective, but unpalatable or non-traditional, solutions.

In this context, I found the recent letter from the EWC (email dated yesterday October 20<sup>th</sup>) to be remarkably even-tempered and a-political, even while raising some long-standing difficult questions. You might consider it an indication of the possibility of an opening or strategy for reaching some kind of cooperative agreement.

My recommendation is this: convene a broad-based working group to look at ALL alternatives in a comprehensive framework. While the work of the Pacific Institute has focused on cost-effective water-use efficiency potential through technical and management approaches (and while we believe the potential of these approaches to be indisputably large), we also believe in the "portfolio" approach that can include appropriate infrastructure; groundwater management; land retirement; crop switching; and other actions – each of which is likely to be unpalatable to one interest group or another. That, however, cannot be allowed to justify removing an option from the table.

654 13th Street, Preservation Park, Oakland, California 94612, U.S.A.  
510-251-1600 | fax: 510-251-2203 | email: [pgleick@pacinst.org](mailto:pgleick@pacinst.org) | [www.pacinst.org](http://www.pacinst.org)



*Research for People and the Planet*

I would be happy to discuss this recommendation in more detail if you wish. And the Institute would be willing to participate in an appropriate role, given our technical expertise on efficiency.

Sincerely,

Dr. Peter H. Gleick

President: Pacific Institute

Member: U.S. National Academy of Sciences

MacArthur Fellow